SWS After Action Report, 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan, Year-Round Shelter Expansion

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2024-25 Severe Weather Shelter After Action Report





5 Main SWS Objectives



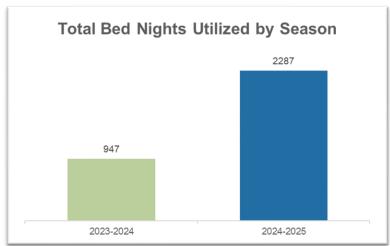
Did we meet those objectives?

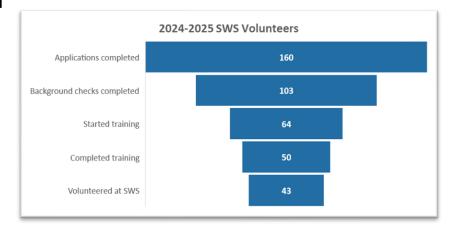
Objective #	Objectives	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)	
1	Operationalize a facility to serve as a SWS from 11/01/24 through 03/15/25		S			
2	Recruit, train, and schedule staff to safely operate the SWS when activation criteria are met.			M		
3	Activate the SWS based on established temperature and weather-based criteria.			M		
4	Communicate SWS operational status to partner agencies and public at least 48 hours before activation.		S			
5	Ensure safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers, and guests.			М		

Top SWS Strengths



- Addition of wound care and medical consult appointments by the Volunteer Medical Outreach Team
 - 85 appointments completed
- Staff and Volunteers overwhelmingly reported feeling safe at the SWS
- Large pool of committed volunteers
- Facility upgrade served more people and provided warm and healthy meals in partnership with Sustainable Connections
- Enhanced coordination between winter shelter providers



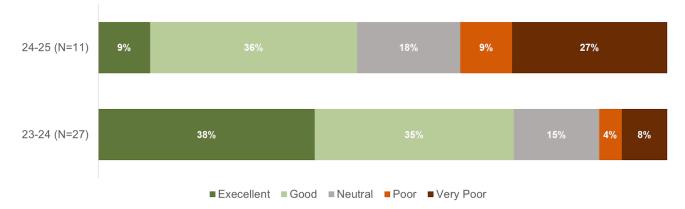


Top SWS Challenges



- WCHCS staff reported that shifts at the SWS impacted existing workload
- Guests reported lower sleep quality than the previous year
- Temperature-based activations were hard to predict when giving 48 hours notice and caused variety of staffing and inventory challenges.

Guest Rating on Sleep Quality by Season





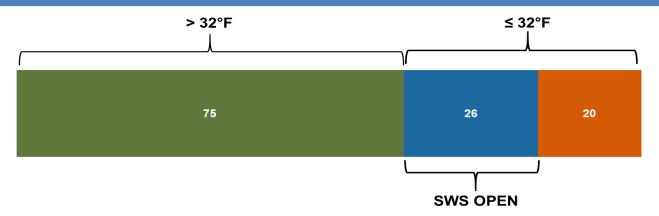
Temperatures from November 15th- March 15th

Attempted to activate services on 28 days.

26 days we were able to secure staffing

With a closer look there were actually 46 days when temperatures dropped below 32°F

This highlights the difficulty of relying on forecast models to accurately predict overnight lows and resulted in 20 "misses" when the shelter was not activated despite conditions that met opening criteria



Let's Talk Numbers Served

26 nights of operation from 11/1/24- 3/15/25

- 318 Unique Guests Served
- 2,287 Bed Nights provided
- <u>4,570</u> meals served
- Average of <u>84</u> guests per night
- Highest number of guests served in one night <u>104</u>



SWS Project Expenses



Four Components to Project Expenses

Serving 2x as many bed nights than the year prior cost for the 26 days of operation for the 24'-25 SWS project was roughly \$415,000 which is broken down into four primary categories

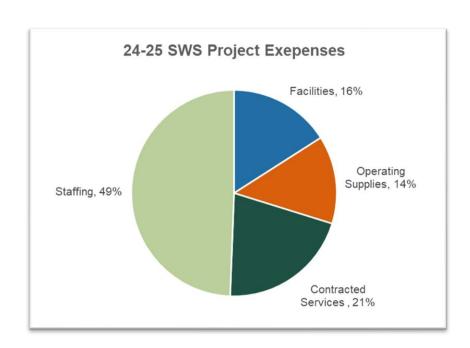
<u>Facilities</u> included the lease, modifications and ongoing utilities.

<u>Operating Supplies</u> included cots, sleeping bags, food, medical supplies and many other things.

<u>Contracted Services</u> included porta potties, cleaners, laundry and security.

Staffing was the most expensive piece of this and utilized staff who already had FTE

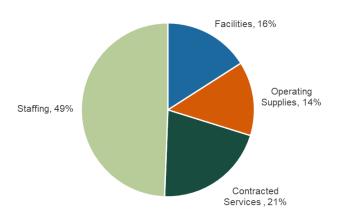
Total of \$403,598 to operate 20 days for the SWS for the 23'-24' season.



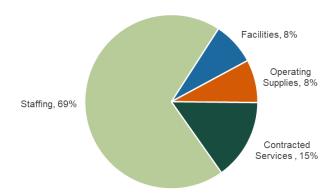
Last Year vs Current



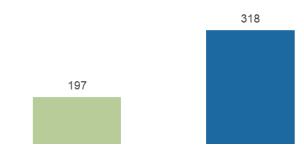
24-25 SWS Project Exepenses



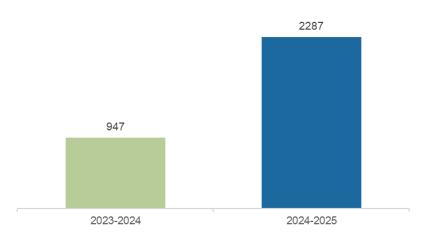
23-24 SWS Project Exepenses







Total Bed Nights Utilized by Season



Introduction to the Whatcom County 5-year Homeless Housing Plan





Introduction to the Plan



What is the Homeless Housing Plan?

- Plan that guides Whatcom County's goals aimed at reducing homelessness and to reduce the harms associated with homelessness
- Determines the strategies we use and where we focus resources
- Developed by the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee with support from the Health and Community Services Dept and passed by County Council

State Requirements



- WA <u>RCW 43.185C.050</u> requires that each local homeless housing task force prepares and recommends a five-year homeless housing plan to the local government legislative body.
- The Dept of Commerce provides oversight and technical assistance for this work; the final guidance was published in October.
- The new plan is due in December 2025.

Housing Services in Whatcom County



Coordinated Entry

 A process for people experiencing housing instability or homelessness to gain access to housing assistance and services across different providers

Housing Pool

- People who qualify for assistance go into the Housing Pool
- A quasi-waitlist that people enter after doing an assessment to determine what kind of assistance they might need
- People are prioritized for receiving services depending on how vulnerable they are
- The prioritization process exits because the need outweighs the availability of services

Other Services

 Various faith-based and grassroots organizations also provide services in our community, such as Lighthouse Mission, use their own intake methods

Continuum of Care



Primary Interventions

- Outreach
- Emergency Shelter
- Rapid Rehousing & Transitional Housing
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Affordable Housing
- Prevention



Continuum of Care

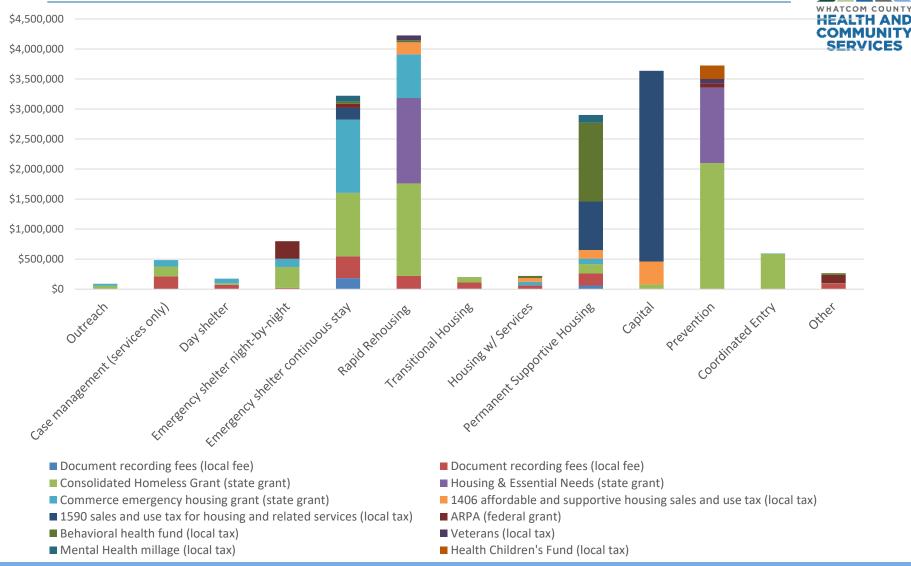


Where Whatcom County contributes to the continuum of care

- Whatcom County collects local taxes and fees, and receives funding from the State of Washington to support homelessnessrelated services and affordable housing in Whatcom County
- Our annual budget is approximately \$15-20M, representing a fraction of the costs of the interventions, but the majority of the local government dollars set aside for these programs

Funds Committed by Funding Source in 2024





External Influences on our Homeless Housing System



- The rapid rise in housing costs that push more people into homelessness.
- Leakiness of the social safety net programs: Supply of federal housing subsidies, physical and behavior healthcare, welfare programs, reentry programs, etc.
- Historical persecution and present-day oppression that leads to current inequities where BIPOC and LGBTQ people are overrepresented in our homeless population.
- Operating in scarcity: The funds available cannot support the assistance every person needs.

What the Plan does Impact



How we focus our resources by intervention type

Examples:

- Should we put more funding into emergency shelters, or affordable housing?
- Should we focus more on Permanent Supportive Housing, or Rapid Rehousing?

How we focus resources by vulnerable populations

Examples:

- People with severe mental illnesses
- People with severe medical illnesses
- Families with children
- Unaccompanied youth
- Older adults

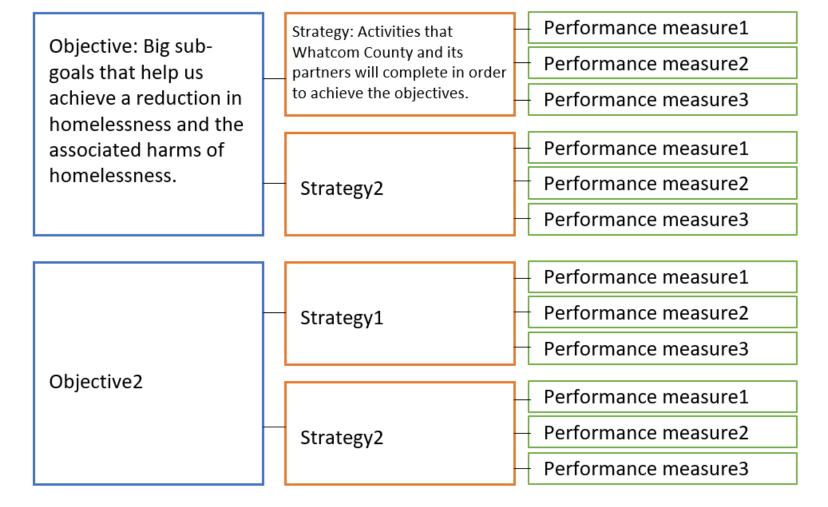
Framework Overview & Timeline



Assumptions: Phenomena that exist outside of the control of our local housing system that impacts how it functions and performs.

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Guiding principles: Value statements that impact the strategies we select and the way those strategies are performed and measured.



Timeline



Guiding Principles & Objectives Jan-March

- Framework development
- Public engagement

Strategies and Performance Measures April-June

- Strategies background/development
- Public engagement
- Provider input

Drafting July-Sept

- Draft shared with Housing Advisory Committee
- Draft available for public comment
- Draft approved by Housing Advisory Committee

Resolution Oct-Nov

- County Executive review
- Resolution proposed to County Council 11/18/25

Community
Engagement
Phase 1:
Feb 6 – March 7



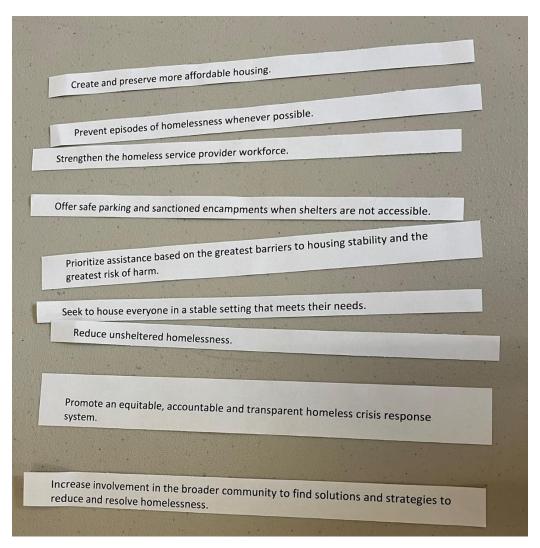
Ranked Choice Objectives Activity & Online Survey





Ranked Choice Objectives Activity & Online Survey





Communities and groups that participated:

- Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness
- North County non-profit Networking Group
- WWU Basic needs
- Community Resource Network (Deming)
- Bellingham City Council
- Youth Action Board (NWYS)
- Ferndale Community Services Advisory Board
- YWCA Shelter and PSH participants
- Basecamp
- Bellingham Farmer's Market
- Ferndale Library
- Bellingham Central Library
- Bridge2Services outreach
- Recovery Café
- Unity Village HomesNow Tiny Homes
- Swift Haven HomesNow Tiny homes
- Garden View Tiny Homes

Guiding Principles and Objectives



Guiding Principles



Value statements that impact the strategies we select and the way those strategies are performed and measured.

- 1. Housing services should build on existing evidence and best practices.
- 2. Every person has the right to make their own decisions and to be treated with dignity.
- 3. Everyone can be housed with the right support.
- 4. Working together as a community creates stronger outcomes for everyone we serve.
- 5. Stable housing is the foundation for good health, positive educational outcomes, financial security, and community engagement.

Objectives



Big sub-goals that help us achieve a reduction in homelessness and the associated harms of homelessness.

- 1. Prevent episodes of homelessness whenever possible.
- 2. Create and preserve more affordable housing.
- 3. Seek to house everyone in a stable setting that meets their needs.
- 4. Reduce unsheltered homelessness by expanding shelter capacity.
- 5. Prioritize assistance based on the greatest barriers to housing stability and the greatest risk of harm.
- 6. Strengthen the homeless service provider workforce.
- 7. Promote an equitable, accountable and transparent homeless crisis response system.

Next Steps



Opportunities for Additional Input from Council:

- 1. Set up one-on-one meetings with Housing Team.
- 2. Attend next Housing Advisory Committee Meeting on 6/12.
- 3. Bring us back for further discussion/input next meeting or in June.

Year-Round Shelter Expansion





Council Resolution and Formation of Subcommittee



- Council Resolution 2024-36 declared a goal of functional zero unsheltered homelessness in Whatcom County within 10 years
- A subcommittee of the Housing Advisory Committee (HAC) was formed to:
 - Deliver recommendations for a County-run severe weather shelter by September 30, 2024 (completed 9/30/24)
 - Deliver a proposal to reduce unsheltered homelessness and expand yearround emergency shelter by December 31st, 2025 (approved by HAC 5/8/24)
- Subcommittee included the HAC chair, and other representatives of homeless service/shelter providers, people with lived experience of homelessness, homeless outreach, small cities, City of B'ham, Indigenous, homeless youth, and a community paramedic.

Existing Shelter



- On a single night in January, more than 450 people were experiencing sheltered homelessness
- Agencies that provide year-round emergency shelter beds:
 - DVSAS
 - HomesNOW!
 - Lighthouse Mission Ministries
 - Northwest Youth Services
 - Road2Home
 - Sun Community Service
 - YWCA
 - Other faith-based shelters
- Hotel/motel rooms are provided by several agencies, some of which are seasonally scaled up and down, mainly for families with children

Need for More Shelter



- On a single night in January, more 300 people were experiencing <u>unsheltered homelessness</u>
- With existing shelter resources, there is not enough shelter for everyone
- Existing system resources should be maintained; considering additional resources rather than repurposing other housing funds

Proposal Overview



The proposal considers:

- Supported and secured emergency rest areas (designated camping/parking)
- Three shelter types including tiny homes, micro/subpopulation shelters, and congregate shelter
- Different populations
- Budget impact
- Location
- Multi-use

Recommendations



Improve shelter network by investing in one or more of the recommended options:

- 1. Supported/secured emergency rest area(s) to reduce dispersed homelessness and facilitate services and relationships
- 2. Tiny Home Village(s)
- 3. Low Barrier Congregate Shelter
- 4. Micro/Subpopulation Shelter(s)

Funding and Resource Considerations



- Start-up capital and ongoing operational costs
 - Potential destabilization of current efforts to maintain existing resources and make investments in affordable housing
- Current strain on local homeless housing system
 - Expand network of providers
- Figures provided in proposal all ballpark only, and would need modification and refinement based on the specific shelter model
 - More details can be provided if/when additional funding is made available

Connection to 5-Year Local Homeless Housing Plan



Objective #4 of the local plan is to reduce unsheltered homelessness by expanding shelter capacity

The recommendations from this proposal are being considered as the strategies to meet this objective



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